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Warren Panel Hears Mrs. Oswald



Mrs. Lee H. Oswald arriving for hearing in Washington

Associated Press Wirephoto

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 3—

Mrs. Lee H. Oswald apparently gave a Presidential commission some information today that it had not heard before about the assassination of President Kennedy. Word that the commission had "learned some new things" from the widow of the man accused of the killing came from J. Lee Rankin of New York, special counsel to the commission. However, Chief Justice Earl Warren, chairman of the group, declined to confirm or deny that it had received anything new from Mrs. Oswald. She was the first witness heard by the

panel in its investigation of the slaying of President Kennedy in Dallas last Nov. 22.

"I would not comment on a witness's testimony in the middle of it," Mr. Warren said after newsmen had told him what Mr. Rankin had said earlier in the day.

The Chief Justice described the questioning of Mrs. Oswald as "laborious because of the interpreter" needed to translate questions to her into Russian and her answers into English.

The smartly dressed Mrs. Oswald was whisked in and out of the building where she testified under oath before the commission. She was not permitted to make any public statements by the Secret Service, whose agents escorted her. But she was allowed to pose briefly for photographers after her first meeting with the panel this morning.

Her physical appearance was in sharp contrast to the rather drab look she had immediately after the assassination. The she wore her hair long and straight. Today her medium brown hair was full but short and with a slight curl.

She wore no makeup, as has been her custom. Her clear complexion, dark eyes and long lashes appeared to eliminate the necessity for makeup.

She was hatless and wore a navy coat with single white button over a royal-blue dress. She had on long black gloves. Her shoes were black and brown with a medium spiked heel, and she carried a two-tone brown handbag.

She Is Termed Helpful

The commission met in its fourth-floor offices in the national headquarters building of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is a white marble structure, close by the Supreme Court and Capitol buildings on Capitol Hill.

In coming and going, Mrs. Oswald passed under a gold-lettered inscription in the lobby that read: "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living."

After her morning testimony of nearly two and a half hours, Mr. Rankin told newsmen there were no real surprises in her answers.

"She was helpful," he said. "The commission heard some information it had not heard before, some new things."

At this point, Mr. Rankin, who was trying to break away from the reporters, was asked whether any "new evidence" had come from the 22-year-old widow. He nodded his head.

Chief Justice Warren, emerging from the afternoon session of more than two hours, said: "I haven't anything to report to you. We're in the middle of it."

He was asked about "new evidence." He replied: "I don't say there's new evidence."

Pressed about the new evidence he grinned and said: "I didn't say that."

Mr. Warren and Mr. Rankin described Mrs. Oswald as "very cooperative" and "very composed." The Chief Justice commented that she had appeared "voluntarily" to answer questions.

Her lawyer, John Thorne of Grand Prairie, Tex., a suburb of Dallas, accompanied her before the commission but did not speak or ask questions, Justice Warren said.

Mr. Warren, asked if Mrs. Oswald had clarified and illuminated some points, replied that "I won't comment on that."

Mr. Rankin said the questioning this morning had "covered part of her period" in the United States, meaning since she had been brought to this country by her husband in 1961 after their marriage in Minsk. Oswald had met her during a two-year visit he made to the Soviet Union.

"It was somewhat in chronological order," Mr. Rankin added. Asked if her testimony had progressed to the point of a trip Oswald had made to Mexico in September and October of 1963, Mr. Rankin replied, "No."

Chief Justice Warren, in discussing a general question on whether testimony taken by the commission would be made public, responded:

"Yes, there will come a time. But it might not be in your lifetime. I am not referring to anything especially, but there may be some things that would involve security. This would be preserved but not made public."

Mr. Warren described the interrogation of Mrs. Oswald as proceeding with only the counsel asking questions. No member of the commission asked any questions, he said.

Five members of the seven-member panel attended today's and Allen W. Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, were present all the time. The others were in and out.

They are Representative Hale Boggs of Louisiana, assistant Democratic leader of the House of Representatives, Representative Gerald R. Ford, Republican of Michigan, and Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky.

Missing were Senator Richard B. Russell, Democrat of Georgia, who had a meeting of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees today, and John J. McCloy, former disarmament adviser to President Kennedy, who was reported out of the country.

The special body was named by President Johnson Nov. 29. It was charged with an investigation and a report to the American people.

In a recent Dallas television interview with station KRLD, Mrs. Oswald said in English that "I don't want to believe but I have too much facts, and facts tell me Lee shot Kennedy."

Her grasp of the English language was obviously inadequate for the commission's questioning. The interpreter,

William Krimer, was supplied by the Department of State.